Frequently Asked Questions about the

Benefits Enrollment Center Grant Opportunity

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For any question not addressed in this document, please email
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Questions from the Webinar on 9/5/23 Concerning the Application Process and Proposal Details

Q: Is there a funding cap for renewal applications for an existing BEC, or may we apply for full funding based on the application tiers listed in the call for proposals?
A: There is not a funding cap. We would ask that you please look at the chart and apply based on the services you intend to provide.

Q: May we access a copy of the presentation slides?
A: Both the slide and the recording of the webinar can be found online at
https://www.ncoa.org/article/grant-opportunity-benefits-enrollment-center-bec

Q: Could you be awarded a smaller amount than what you applied for?
A: Yes, you could, based on expansion goals and your application. In such a scenario, NCOA would reach out to the applicant to discuss the smaller proposed award before any final grant negotiations.

Q: Are the grant amount and enrollment requirements figures for one year or two?
A: The grant amount is for a 19-month cycle.

Q: Is it an eligibility requirement to serve at least 50% of one of the sub-populations (AAPI, rural, people with disabilities)?
A: It is not, though applicants that do serve marginalized and underserved populations will have a competitive advantage.

Q: Does the minimum requirement of 500 clients for the $175,000 grant award represent the number of clients for the full 19-month grant period or is this an annual number?
A: Yes, this is for the full 19-month grant period.

Q: Has the past standard of 1.75 applications per client been removed?
A: This question refers to the previous requirement that BECs were to help clients apply for multiple benefits programs. Since this RFP permits applicants to focus on 1-5 core benefits, this is not a requirement but is still encouraged among those organizations assisting with multiple programs.

Q: Will recertifying benefits/certifying new benefits for existing clients count towards client count?

A: While we strongly encourage outreach to new clients, recertifying benefits for existing clients will count as well.

Q: Can you define "enroll". For example, we are a local SHIP and help people enroll in benefits. We help people use systems to apply for benefits. There are times we enroll them directly but more often; we often help teach people how to enroll after we help them explore and find plans.
A: NCOA understands that organizations are not necessarily administering agencies. Applicants should demonstrate that they are using a person-centered approach to assist clients with screening, completing and troubleshooting applications to the best extent possible.

Q: What is the deadline for submission?
A: Oct. 5, 2023, at 12 p.m. Eastern Time

Q: Do you have recommendations for organizations applying on behalf of a coalition?
A: Organizations may come together to apply for this grant, but there should be one agency applying for the award and overseeing the coordination of effort; e.g., some existing BECs utilize a "hub and spoke" approach wherein one state agency takes the lead for implementation. This effort works best only when the partner agencies already have an existing coalition structure in place, for example, state networks of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).

Q: Do individuals need to be enrolled in Medicare or can they be assisted under this grant, but not yet enrolled in Medicare?
A: The goal of this grant is to assist individuals who are Medicare beneficiaries with applying for benefits. However, we recognize that a few programs (SNAP, LIHEAP) may use differing definitions for qualifying individuals who are "elderly" or disabled; if your organization is only assisting with these two programs, then the individuals served can be older adults who are not yet eligible or enrolled in Medicare.

Q: For an organization that has a MIPPA (Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act) grant, would showing clients served above the previous MIPPA grant year be enough to show clients served to be sufficient?
A: Yes.

Q: Can we upload documents and promo materials we have used in the past with our applications to illustrate our efforts for this current application cycle?

A: Previous documents and promotional materials will not be considered for this current application cycle.

Q: How many letters of support do we need?
A: Letters of support are optional and will not count against you if you do not have them. However, if you have one or more organizations that you are partnering with, please feel free to describe their role in detail and include letters of support from them.

Q: Can we apply for more than one related grant with another organization?
A: We encourage diversification of revenue, however, if you receive awards from other organizations related to this grant, you cannot double count the number of clients served under both programs when reporting.

Q: Are matching funds required?
A: No. Matching funds are not required.

Q: What is the recommended admin cost associated with the grant?
A: We believe it is 10%, but we want to double check with our finance team as this is Federal money that is being used. We want to make sure that we're obeying all the regulatory guidelines related to sub-granting Federal funds.

Q: Is it an eligibility requirement to serve at least 50% of one of the subpopulations listed: (rural, AAPI or persons with disabilities)?
A: It is not an exclusionary criterion. However, to be the most competitive in the application process, especially for new potential grantees, we are looking for organizations that go deep in one or more of those communities.

Q: Can you mention required participation in sam.gov?
A: Because this opportunity is being funded through a federal agency, there is a requirement that any sub-grantee of this Federal funding have a registry at "sam.gov." It's just a guarantee that you exist as an entity. We would like for you to have that registry by the time of submission.

Q: If your BEC performs member applications and does not count them on the BEC monthly reports, can we still indicate that MSP and LIS are 2 core benefits that we perform?
A: Yes. If you perform member applications for core benefits that are not listed on the BEC monthly reports, you can still indicate that they are core benefits on your application.

Other Frequently Asked Questions from Previous Grant Cycles

Q: Do we have to identify all personnel who will contribute in any way to this grant?

A: No. Staff members at your organization who will be providing only administrative or budgeting support to this grant do not need to be identified. We are interested in the staff who will be carrying out or supervising the activities you propose in your application.

Q: Are community-based organizations eligible to apply?

A: Organizations eligible to apply for BEC grants include state or community-based nonprofit organizations, state government agencies, tribal entities, and faith-based organizations addressing the needs of older adults and younger adults with disabilities.

Q: Is an organization that is just beginning a senior program or a benefits assistance program eligible to apply for this grant?
A: We anticipate that we will fund organizations that are already experienced in providing benefits enrollment assistance. We will be evaluating applicants on whether they have proven access and credibility in serving their target population. However, we will not disqualify proposals from organizations that are newer to providing benefits assistance to older adults or adults with disabilities. We will be looking for whether those applications propose realistic and significant systems to improve benefits enrollment in their target area.

Q: What if a client is screened but does not appear to be eligible for any of the core benefits, would they count toward our BEC's goal?
A: A client who is not eligible to apply for any of the core benefits would count toward the total number of clients assisted if they were assisted with an optional benefit outside the five core benefits. We anticipate that every grantee will screen some individuals who are ineligible or choose not to apply for benefits. It is important that grantees screen clients who may not be eligible for any core benefits.

Q: Are BECs required to provide personally identifiable data about clients in the monthly reporting? Some immigrant clients are concerned with this information being shared with Federal agencies.
A: Grantees are required to report data in the aggregate. We do not ask for client-specific data.

Q: Where are the current BECs located? Do most of the current BECs serve entire states or smaller areas, such as multiple counties or a metropolitan area?
A: A list of the current BECs and the areas they serve can be found at https://www.ncoa.org/article/meet-our-benefits-enrollment-centers. Some of the current projects are statewide while others target a smaller area.

Q: My organization serves all listed target populations. Should I check all the boxes on the application?
A: Although an organization may serve all eligible clients seeking services, NCOA would like applicants to highlight targeted strategies that are unique to each of the checked special populations.

Q: How does NCOA define persons with disabilities for the purpose of this grant opportunity?
A: Client's eligibility to be counted toward this grant must meet the criteria of a Medicare beneficiary.

Q: Can we use some of these grant funds to pay for outreach activities?
A: Yes, you can use some of these grant funds for outreach. However, remember these grants' main goal is enrollment, not outreach. Outreach is an ancillary activity that generates enrollment. Please explain in your proposal how any non-enrollment activities you intend to undertake, such as outreach and education, will contribute to the primary goal of enrolling individuals in these benefits programs.

Q: Is there a maximum percentage of the grant that we can use for technology?
A: We don't have a specific cut-off in mind for funds used on technology purchases. The key guideline here, as in outreach, is that the grant is focused on enrollment. If you choose to budget for technological purchases, please be clear about how those purchases will contribute to the "bottom line" of increasing enrollments.

Q: Can we use some of the grant funding to pay for training for our staff or for staff members at partner organizations on the details of benefits eligibility and enrollment processes?
A: Yes. Since the training is ancillary (like outreach), it should be tied to the changes you propose to improve the benefits access system in your target area.

Q: Are partnerships required as part of the Benefits Enrollment Center?
A: We expect all successful proposals to describe how they intend to work with the government agencies determining eligibility for the core benefits in their area. We do not require specific partnerships, but since these grants are focused on the creation of a seamless person-centered system of benefits assistance and enrollment, we strongly encourage all applicants to think about how other organizations could best contribute to that system.

Q: Will we receive start-up funds at the beginning of the grant period?
A: Yes, you will receive a portion of the grant award at the very beginning of the grant period.